
45 Immigrant cultural capital in business: the New Zealand experience

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Introduction

Since the late 1980s, changes in New Zealand's immigration policy have opened doors to immigrants from a wider range of countries than had previously been the case. Recognizing the need to increase human capital to further economic and social development, New Zealand has competed actively with other countries of settlement (particularly Australia, Canada and the United States) to attract immigrants with high-level skills and those capable of contributing entrepreneurial ability and investment, irrespective of their countries of origin. The combined effects of the abolition in 1986 of the preference for immigrants from Western Europe (Burke, 1986) and the introduction of a points-based merit system in 1991, were a rapid increase in the number of immigrants in the General Skills and Business categories in the 1990s, particularly from China, India, Korea and other Asian countries. This inflow has had important demographic consequences for New Zealand, contributing to an increase in the country's Asian population, from 99 756 (3 per cent of the total population) in 1991 to 237 459 (6.6 per cent of the total population) in 2001 (Statistics New Zealand, 2002).

In addition to their qualifications and skills, many of the new immigrants from Asia, as well as those from Africa, the Middle East and other regions, bring with them certain cultural behaviours and understandings that differ considerably from those considered the norm in New Zealand. These different values, insights, tastes and appreciations developed in other cultural settings may be represented as their immigrant 'cultural capital'.

In this chapter we first define more precisely the components of immigrant cultural capital. Then, drawing on the New Zealand experience, particular attention will be paid to perceptions of the value of immigrant cultural capital and the ways in which this form of capital is utilized in the New Zealand business context both by mainstream companies and by immigrant entrepreneurs who have set up their own enterprises. An argument will be advanced that immigrant cultural capital offers considerable potential for business development but that much more could be done to gain the full benefits of such capital in New Zealand.

Immigrants and cultural capital

'Culture', as Smith (2000) points out, is a term with multiple connotations, interpretations and symbolic associations. In a narrow sense, culture can refer to major achievements in the creative arts (high culture or Culture with a capital C). The more favoured interpretation, however, is that culture encompasses the distinctive features of the everyday life of people who form a particular social group. The *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (UNESCO, 2001: 2), for example, states that:

. . . culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

These traditions, beliefs, values, norms, routines and habits form the basis of the cultural capital of different groups of people. According to Bourdieu's (1986) classic distinction, cultural capital is one of the three main forms of capital that people possess, alongside economic capital (money and property rights) and social capital (rights and privileges arising from social relationships). In Bourdieu's view, cultural capital exists in embodied, objectified and institutional forms. Embodied cultural capital manifests itself in the aesthetic, cognitive and moral preferences, propensities, standards, norms, routines and habits that govern the collective behaviour of individuals. Objectified cultural capital is expressed in cultural goods and objects such as works of art, books, machines and instruments. Institutionalized cultural capital involves places of learning where knowledge may be acquired and credentials obtained. However, whereas Bourdieu emphasizes the class-linked nature of cultural capital and the disadvantages faced by those outside the dominant culture, other schools of thought place cultural capital in a wider human capital framework (see, amongst others, Becker, 1996; de Bruin, 1998; Throsby, 2001; Trueba, 2002). According to such an approach: 'the emphasis shifts to the way cultural capital shared by non-dominant groups can, under certain conditions, provide positive resources and the basis for opportunity' (Firkin, 2003: 64). This view of cultural capital as representing a potential 'resource' and 'opportunity' for immigrants is the one followed in this chapter.

As with economic capital, cultural capital can cross borders as people gain access to other ideas and experiences through books, journals, newspapers, radio, television and cinema, and the Internet. Trade and tourism provide further opportunities for interaction with people of different cultures. Migration, however, has the potential for producing the most profound and long-lasting effects on cultural transfer. As Sowell (1996: 388) maintains, the historic role of migration in spreading knowledge and different practices has been 'monumental in its consequences'. Snowman (2002: 373) endorses this view and claims that migration provides a means 'by which a society refreshes itself and avoids the dangers of cultural stagnation'.

As well as ideas and skills, immigrant attributes include various attitudes, beliefs and values. De Bruin (1998: 11) counts as immigrant assets 'cultural energy' and a determination to succeed. This view is shared by Sowell (1996: 3): 'Sometimes it is not so much specific skills as a set of attitudes toward work and toward risk-taking, which may lead immigrants to excel in fields in which they had no experience before immigration.'

For Trueba (2002: 23) an important aspect of immigrant cultural capital is 'a general resiliency associated with the ability to endure hardships and overcome obstacles' and the capacity to cross successfully cultural divides. In his view, such abilities are 'crucial for success in a modern diversified society'.

How, then, does cultural capital link with the business activities of immigrants? It is recognized that there is considerable diversity both between and within immigrant groups, and that a variety of circumstances affect not only the quality and quantity of the cultural resources that individuals have at their disposal but also the extent to which they are able to draw on them for economic advantage. Age, gender, social class, education and

family situation are but some of the factors that have a bearing on the possession of or access to cultural capital (Light and Gold, 2000). In general terms, however, amongst some of the culturally-related resources that may be available to certain immigrants for positive economic outcomes are the following:

1. Bilingual/multilingual language skills. Immigrants from countries where English is not the main language are often proficient in one or more languages other than English. Native-speaker competence in these languages may have importance not only in catering for the needs of local ethnic communities but also in promoting trade links and tourism ventures involving countries where the languages are spoken (see, for example, Kipp et al., 1995; Watts, 1998).
2. Educational background. Immigrants may have gained advanced business qualifications and professional training pre-migration. In New Zealand, for example, studies of self-employment typically show high levels of education amongst recent Asian immigrants, which is unsurprising in view of the points-based criteria used for immigrant selection that place a high priority on educational attainment (Lidgard and Yoon, 1999; Ho et al., 1999).
3. Work experience. Immigrants who have had previous experience in the business field in their countries of origin (or in other countries where they have resided) are likely to possess insights into the business environment in these countries, including knowledge of the regulatory systems involved as well as an understanding of the cultural context in which business operates (courtesy protocols and procedures, hierarchical structures, status relationships and so on).
4. Family and friendship connections in countries of origin. Many immigrants have extensive networks of family members and friends in their home countries. These networks have competitive potential in assessing marketing opportunities as well as in making connections with suppliers and clients. In some cases immigrants may retain their business interests in their countries of origin and use return visits to consolidate or extend these networks. Such transnational business links have been a feature of Chinese business immigrants to different countries (Ip et al., 2000; Tracy et al., 2001).
5. Links with co-ethnics in the host country. Ties with those with whom they have cultural affinity in the host country can provide support and encouragement for immigrants embarking on entrepreneurial activities. Contacts made through ethnic associations, church groups and the rest may be a source of advice and, in some cases, financial assistance. Examples of the roles played by ethnic links are provided by, amongst others, Greene (1997) for Ismaili Pakistani immigrants in Southwestern USA; Ip (1999) for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Brisbane, Australia; Leonard and Tibrewal (1993) for Asian Indians in Southern California; Teixeira (1998) for Portuguese immigrants in Toronto, Canada; and Razin (1993) for immigrant entrepreneurs in Israel, Canada and California.
6. Attitudes, values and beliefs. Finally, there are the attitudinal aspects of cultural capital. The cultural backgrounds of immigrants may favour business enterprise through diligence, probity and preparedness to take calculated risks: see Sowell's (1996) description of successful immigrants from China and Japan in the United States and other countries.

Cultural capital and business in New Zealand

To what extent is New Zealand capitalizing on the inflow of people with different cultural backgrounds? More particularly, how is the business sector utilizing immigrant cultural capital? In what ways are immigrants drawing on their cultural resources in entrepreneurial activities? To answer these questions we will draw on the results of research carried out as part of Massey University's New Settlers Programme (NSP) during the period 1998–2004, and focus on three areas: general perceptions of the value of immigrant cultural capital contributions; use of immigrant cultural resources in companies; and the use of immigrant cultural resources in self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Perceptions of the value of immigrant cultural capital contributions

An NSP survey carried out in 2003 was designed to elicit views on the value of the cultural capital contribution of immigrants to New Zealand (Watts et al., 2004). The participants in this study were senior faculty members in charge of teaching programmes in New Zealand tertiary education institutions (universities, polytechnics and so on). Senior faculty members were chosen as they have key roles in helping to realize the government's vision of New Zealand as a knowledge-based economy (see Frederick et al., 1999) by broadening the intellectual and cultural horizons of students and adding to their knowledge and experience. In addition, senior staff members may be expected to have personal experience of immigrant issues since tertiary institutions have become increasingly more diverse by attracting students from around the world as well as recruiting staff in a competitive, international market. The teaching units involved in the survey covered a wide range of disciplines, including business studies and economics.

The main data-gathering instrument for the study was a questionnaire mailed to heads of teaching units in New Zealand's main tertiary education institutions in March–April 2003. Of 351 questionnaires sent out, 159 completed questionnaires were returned: 90 from universities, 54 from polytechnics and 15 from other institutions offering degree-level courses (private training establishments, colleges of education not attached to universities and so on). In general, the heads of teaching units that did not return completed questionnaires were in disciplines related to the pure and applied sciences and may not have felt that the survey was relevant to their subject areas. The second phase of the study comprised in-depth face-to-face interviews with a sub-set of 17 respondents in different institutions.

An overwhelming majority of the participants (152 out of 159, or 95.6 per cent) believed that immigrants had made a positive impact on aspects of New Zealand life in the past decade, and of these 68 (44.7 per cent) assessed this as a 'great impact'. The main areas of immigrant cultural capital influence were perceived to be in cuisine and hospitality, ethnic relations, education and training, social life and the creative arts as well as other areas of industry and commerce.

With respect to cuisine and hospitality, many participants added comments referring to the increasing number of Chinese, Indian, Thai, Malaysian and other ethnic food outlets and the wider range of food products available not only through specialist shops but also on supermarket shelves. This proliferation of ethnic food suppliers may be interpreted as a response to both the demands of a growing ethnic clientèle as well as a developing interest in 'exotic' foods among New Zealanders which has been nurtured by opportunities for overseas travel as well as media influences (television cooking programmes, international

dining features in newspapers and magazines and so on). It may also be an indicator that some immigrants, particularly those from Asian countries, have turned to setting up small restaurants or 'take-away' food outlets because of difficulties experienced in establishing businesses in the commercial areas in which they were engaged in their countries of origin or because of other labour market problems (see Ho et al., 1999).

The senior faculty members also recognized that subtle social changes were occurring as the result of immigration. As far as ethnic relations and social life were concerned, a number of the participants pointed to the fact that New Zealanders are having to face up to the realities of living in a more multicultural society. They were aware, however, that for some native-born New Zealanders the emerging multiculturalism was a source of anxiety, distrust or resentment. As some of the participants pointed out, monocultural attitudes are still deeply entrenched in some sections of the population.

Regarding cross-cultural exchanges, the participants considered that personal experience, either through personal interaction with immigrants in social life or in the workplace, was the most important means of gaining access to different cultural ideas and perspectives. They assessed this personal contact as being more important for cultural transmission than the media (television, radio, newspapers, Internet and the rest). This result is in keeping with the model of innovation diffusion proposed by Rogers (1995). In Rogers's model the media play a role in the knowledge acquisition stage but interpersonal contact is more important at the critical persuasion stage when people form attitudes that may persuade them to accept and/or adopt new ideas or practices.

Almost two-thirds of the participants (113 out of 159, or 64.8 per cent) considered that New Zealanders were aware to at least a 'moderate extent' of the cultural impact of immigrants in recent years. However, fewer than half (74 out of 159, or 46.6 per cent) were of the opinion that New Zealanders welcomed this cultural impact to at least a 'moderate' extent. Some of the participants thought that this lack of appreciation on the part of some sections of the general public could be attributed to failure at the government level to promote the positive social, cultural and economic benefits of immigration. Only 17 of the 159 participants (10.7 per cent) considered that the promotion of public understanding of immigration had been 'helpful'. In addition, the participants considered that the potential benefits of immigration were undermined by the lack of well-defined government policies to assist new arrivals in their settlement and to help them obtain appropriate employment. Overall, the results reflected a concern that New Zealand has failed to capitalize fully on its efforts to attract quality immigrants and that considerably more could be done to provide an environment in which immigrants felt welcome, valued and encouraged to engage fully in society.

The 17 follow-up interviews included both New Zealand-born academics (ten) and those who had been recruited from other countries (seven). A key point emerging from these interviews was the conviction that skilled immigrants bring to New Zealand valuable personal qualities, in addition to their qualifications and experiences. These qualities include commitment, diligence and a will to succeed. The common view expressed was that such qualities not only help immigrants to adapt to life in New Zealand but also strengthen the work ethic in the occupational activities in which they participate.

Immigrant contributions to innovation were another theme in the interviews. Specific examples were given of ways in which immigrants had contributed to new developments. For example, the head of a technology department, who had emigrated to New Zealand

from South Africa, recounted his work experiences after he arrived. He was appointed as a member of the team involved in the design of a new version of a household appliance. The design team at the time included Asian, British and South African as well as New Zealand members. In his opinion, New Zealand has produced creative thinkers but industry needs the contribution of people from other countries with experience in developing ideas to meet the demands of competitive world markets. In other words, innovation needs to be linked with practicality and feasibility.

While those interviewed endorsed the value to New Zealand generally of an injection of different skills and experiences, there were doubts whether the country was taking full advantage of the cultural capital resources of immigrants. Unemployment and underemployment were identified as the most serious obstacles to immigrant contributions. The interviewees gave a number of examples of well qualified, skilled immigrants, especially those who came from Asia, who had experienced extreme difficulty in securing appropriate employment in New Zealand. These difficulties obviously limited their ability to share with New Zealanders the skills, insights and experiences that they had developed over many years pre-migration. An example was a young architect with a degree from Lebanon who (in the opinion of the senior faculty member concerned) had excellent credentials and should have been readily employable in his profession. However, because of problems experienced in securing employment in New Zealand, he had ended up having to seek employment in Australia.

The concerns voiced in the interviews were very similar to those expressed in other studies of the employment in New Zealand of skilled immigrants from Asian and other non-Western regions (see, for example, Basnayake, 1999; Boyer, 1996; Department of Internal Affairs, 1996; Henderson et al., 2001; Trlin et al., 2004; Watts and Trlin, 2000). The studies identify a number of employment barriers faced by immigrants, ranging from problems in having qualifications recognized in the marketplace and gaining registration from professional bodies, to the reluctance of employers to hire people without New Zealand work experience and non-native-speakers of English. By concentrating on the supposed 'deficiencies' of immigrants, the New Zealand business sector may be failing to recognize the positive features of the cultural capital that they possess: their diverse educational and work experiences, contacts and networks overseas, expertise in applying innovations, and their cross-cultural and multilingual skills. It is these cultural aspects that are the focus of the next study reviewed.

Use of immigrant cultural resources by New Zealand companies

The findings of the 2003 study are consistent with the overall results of an earlier NSP survey conducted in 1998 (Watts and Trlin, 1999). The main aim of this survey was to determine the extent to which mainstream New Zealand companies engaged in business activity in the international marketplace made use of immigrant resources. A comprehensive questionnaire was designed which included questions on the numbers of immigrants currently in the companies' workforce, policies concerning their recruitment, training and support and the ways in which their languages, cultural knowledge and understanding and links with their countries of origin were utilized in business operations. Of 460 companies contacted in this postal survey, 187 agreed to provide the information sought: 88 firms involved in exporting, 88 in tourism and 11 in other areas of international business (such as consulting and finance). Follow-up interviews were held

with 19 companies to obtain richer data, particularly relating to best practice in managing diversity in the workforce and effective use of immigrant cultural resources.

This study of company policies and practices was complemented by a small survey of 52 young immigrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) who had gained tertiary-level New Zealand business qualifications. The main object of this study was to gather information on their experiences and to elicit their views on the value placed on their cultural insights and understandings in the New Zealand business environment.

Survey of company policies and practices Of the 187 companies in the main survey, 130 (69.5 per cent) reported that they had NESB immigrants in their workforce. The main languages of the immigrant employees were Chinese languages/dialects, followed by Japanese, Samoan and German. Ninety-seven (74.6 per cent) of the 130 companies employing immigrants indicated that their NESB employees used their native languages at work in some way. Companies in the tourism category had the greatest interest in drawing on the language skills of their NESB immigrant employees. Fifty-seven (91.9 per cent) of the tourism companies that employed NESB immigrants said that use was made of their native languages, compared with 32 (55.2 per cent) of the companies involved in exporting and eight (80 per cent) of those engaged in other areas of international business. In the main, the multilingual language resources within the companies were drawn upon for tasks involving assistance to clients visiting New Zealand, translating documents, handling correspondence, interpreting for other staff and assisting with product marketing.

There were, however, indications that the multilingual resources available to companies could be used more effectively. Twenty (15.4 per cent) out of the 130 companies employing NESB immigrants reported that there were employees in their companies whose native speaker skills could be better utilized. One exporting company, for instance, acknowledged that much more use should be made of its Chinese-speaking employees in securing new business in China. In general, the results of the 1998 NSP survey are in accord with other studies of the use of languages in business in New Zealand (see, amongst others, Aitken and Hall, 2000; Enderwick and Gray, 1992; Watts, 1987, 1992, 1994). These studies indicate that although there is movement towards making greater use of the languages of overseas customers, New Zealand falls short of the efforts made by countries such as Australia (Stanley et al., 1990; Kipp et al., 1995), and the United Kingdom (Hagen, 1989).

The Watts and Trlin (1999) study also found that use of the cultural knowledge and understanding of immigrant employees was even less common than that of immigrant languages. Less than half of the 130 companies signalled that they utilized the cultural knowledge and understanding of their immigrant employees. The main use of this cultural knowledge and understanding was in staff development programmes intended to promote better understanding of the requirements of overseas customers. Other ways in which the cultural background knowledge of immigrant employees was seen to be of advantage to the companies concerned were meeting and welcoming overseas visitors; providing advice for staff posted abroad; briefing sales and marketing staff on customer preferences; advising on protocols when hosting senior management from foreign affiliate companies; and preparing translations of publicity, technical information and so on. Specific examples were given of areas in which it was vitally necessary in recruitment to

target people with particular cultural backgrounds. For example, companies involved in the hospitality industry referred to the importance of cultural input in both the planning of menus and the preparation of food to suit the dietary preferences of international tourists. Meat-exporting companies sought Muslim personnel to follow Halal customs in preparing meat for export to Middle Eastern markets, while in-bound tourism companies recruited Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other Asian tour guides to accompany tour parties from their particular homelands.

Cultural networks were the least tapped immigrant resource. Only 38 (29.2 per cent) of the 130 companies with NESB immigrants in their workforce indicated that they made use of the overseas contacts and networks of their immigrant employees. Twenty (32.3 per cent) of the tourism companies which employed NESB immigrants reported that use was made of these connections, compared with 17 (29.3 per cent) of the exporting companies and one (10 per cent) of the companies in the 'other' category. This result suggests that New Zealand companies may be overlooking the fact that many skilled immigrants have had considerable work experience pre-migration and have retained strong links with former colleagues as well as friends and family members involved in business in their countries of origin. By failing to exploit these connections, New Zealand companies may be missing out on an important source of competitive advantage.

With respect to staff recruitment and promotion, the failure to make effective use of immigrant cultural capital in the workforce would seem to reflect a view that competence in languages other than English and understanding of other cultures are far less important than other attributes. Overall, the three factors considered most important by the companies surveyed were personal features (personality, ability to fit into the company organization and so on), New Zealand qualifications and training, and New Zealand work experience. These criteria may be seen to work against those who come from different cultural backgrounds and favour the local-born. This situation bears out the observation made by Collins (2003: 64) that the 'labour market more often penalizes rather than rewards [immigrant] cultural capital'.

The follow-up interviews with 17 of the participating companies that expressed most interest in immigrant resources shed further light on the asset that many of the other companies were overlooking. Best practice examples provided by these 17 companies included actively seeking immigrant workers who possessed the skills and experience sought by the company; providing prospective applicants with clear information on work and living conditions in New Zealand; and assisting in their settlement after arrival by finding accommodation and so on. Best practice also involved well-planned induction programmes that helped to familiarize new employees with the company's operations and their particular area of work. Companies that made best use of immigrant resources included in their human resources databases information about the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of new staff members and made use of this information when the need arose. An example of effective use of immigrant resources was a malting company that employed the Spanish-speaking skills of a staff member from Panama to monitor co-operative barley breeding projects in Uruguay, while a Swedish-speaking staff member contributed to the development of joint venture projects in Northern Europe. Immigrant employees in this company were also involved in international marketing, as well as accessing and disseminating useful information that appeared in foreign language scientific and technical publications.

Survey of qualified immigrants To gain further information on the use of immigrant cultural resources in business activities, this time from the perspectives of immigrant employees or potential employees, a small survey of qualified immigrants was conducted. Carried out with the co-operation of the alumni associations of Massey University and the University of Auckland, the target group comprised immigrants from countries where English is not the main language, who had completed university business degrees through business schools in these two New Zealand universities since their arrival. The assumption was that such graduates (with their combination of New Zealand business qualifications, high levels of competence in English proven through successful completion of studies in an English-medium university environment) should be well placed to obtain employment in New Zealand.

Fifty-two graduates consented to participate in the survey and completed and returned the questionnaires sent to them. They were mainly male, aged under 40 years and of Asian ethnicity. Most had been in New Zealand for less than nine years. The majority had masters degrees or above, completed between 1994 and 1998, and had had some business experience before coming to New Zealand.

Despite their high qualifications and previous work experience, at the time of the survey only 41 (78.8 per cent) of the 52 graduates were in employment. Twenty-seven were employed in companies with international customers or clients or were self-employed in areas that related to international business. Fourteen were employed in companies that were solely New Zealand-based. As far as their language backgrounds were concerned, 29 reported that they made use of their native-speaker skills at work in some way, but in the majority of cases the incidence of use was quite low (up to three times a month). Fourteen of the participants currently employed said that their cultural background knowledge was considered to be of relevance in their work activities. Only seven reported that their cultural networks were drawn on in their employment. In general, the immigrants were of the view that their skills in languages other than English and their experience and cultural links could be used to better advantage. As one immigrant employee commented: 'If in the past my world view had been recognised, my employers would be better off.'

The participants also drew attention to a range of problems that they believed impeded the effective utilization of immigrant resources. These included the apparent reluctance of some employers to hire immigrant staff. The graduates attributed this reluctance to perceptions that cultural differences constituted a handicap that made it difficult for immigrants to fit into the New Zealand working environment. There was also, in their opinion, a widespread belief in the business community that NESB immigrants lacked appropriate levels of competence in written English, and that clients disliked dealing with non-native-speakers of English as they found it difficult to adjust to their different accents. On the basis of their personal experience, they were of the opinion that discrimination against 'foreigners' adversely affected their employment opportunities.

Together, these two surveys highlight the lack of recognition by New Zealand companies of immigrant cultural capital as a resource. Rather, the cultural capital of immigrants, including their linguistic and cultural competencies, overseas qualifications and work experience, and contacts and networks in other countries, are at best overlooked, and at worst regarded as a handicap. For skilled immigrants facing barriers to and in some cases discrimination in finding employment in their field, an option is self-employment.

Use of immigrant cultural resources in self-employment

How, then, do the experiences of immigrants employed in New Zealand companies compare with those of immigrants who are in self-employment with respect to use of their cultural resources? Information enabling such comparisons to be made was obtained in a multi-case study involving in-depth interviews with immigrants who were managing their own businesses (North and Trlin, 2004). Participants for this study were mainly skilled immigrants who entered New Zealand after the points system was introduced in 1991, all from non-traditional source countries, and who were recruited with the assistance of local council initiatives in business development, immigrant associations and agencies, and through networking. The main purpose of the study was to identify the reasons why immigrants start up businesses in New Zealand and the factors that affect their business performance.

Of the 26 immigrants who participated in the study, six had businesses in a provincial city (Palmerston North) and 20 in a larger metropolitan area (Auckland). The majority of the participants were 41 years of age or over and relatively recent arrivals, principally from Asia, South Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Males (18) outnumbered females (eight). As a group the participants were well qualified, with 16 of the 26 having university degrees. They were also proficient in a range of languages: 23 reported that they were able to speak, read and write in two to three languages and/or dialects, while three claimed proficiency in four or more languages. Their businesses were almost all small in size but covered a wide range of activities principally connected with manufacturing, the wholesale and retail trade and hospitality. Despite the small size of the businesses, about half reported that they had overseas business dealings, mainly involving their regions of origin: seven were importing raw materials or products, four exported products and a further six were preparing to export products.

Most had taken up self-employment within two years of their arrival in New Zealand. Only four of the participants had taken on self-employment because of a lack of success in finding other employment. In fact, almost half had left another work position in New Zealand in order to embark on self-employment. This result is in contrast to some of the other studies of self-employed immigrants that have identified employment barriers as a main motivation for starting one's own business (see, for example, Boyer, 1996; Henderson et al., 2001; Ho et al., 1999; Lidgard and Yoon, 1999). For most of the participants, the reasons for going into business were a combination of push factors (previous work was not secure, not fulfilling, inadequately remunerated) and pull factors (seeing market opportunities, using business experience gained pre-migration, wanting more autonomy and control over hours of work, and so on).

The participants identified a number of factors that they believed placed them at a disadvantage compared with New Zealand-born business people. These included many of the difficulties identified in the Forsyte Research study of business immigrants (Forsyte Research, 1998). Unfamiliarity with the New Zealand business environment, lack of knowledge of regulatory conditions, uncertainty as to where to go to obtain legal and financial advice, and restricted contacts with members of the local business community had all hindered the establishment and/or start-up phase of their business operations. English language difficulties also featured highly as non-native speakers of English faced linguistic and cultural barriers in dealing with New Zealand officials, suppliers and customers. In particular, accent, idiomatic expressions and culturally-embedded concepts in

language expression created difficulties. Specific examples of other difficulties experienced ranged from problems in dealing with financial institutions after arrival as they did not have a credit history in New Zealand, and with immigration authorities concerning both their own visas and the recruitment of other immigrants as workers. There were also cases of racial abuse and harassment.

Despite these perceived linguistic, cultural and commercial handicaps, most of the self-employed immigrants had generally positive views regarding their business ventures. Indeed, with one exception, all the participants considered that they had made the right decision to go into business in New Zealand. All were meeting regular payments, including salaries/wages, bills and loans. In addition, more than two-thirds reported that they had plans to expand or diversify in the coming year. However, most of the participants also wanted to enjoy the more relaxed lifestyle that had attracted them to New Zealand. Only a few of them indicated that they had ambitions to be wealthy or influential.

Part of the reason for their generally positive outlook on business may be found in compensatory factors linked to their own cultural capital resources. Similar to immigrants in business in Australia, as described by Ip (1999) and Lever-Tracy et al. (1999), these New Zealand self-employed immigrants derived benefit from their cultural background as well as connections with members of their cultural group both in the country of origin and in New Zealand. These links through family, friendship and business networks helped provide access to suppliers, agents, distributors and clients. In some cases venture capital had been obtained through these networks and partnership arrangements made.

While immigrant communities in New Zealand are small in comparison with those found in countries such as the United States (see Light and Bhachu, 1993), they still play an important role in assisting community members and their business enterprises. Apart from giving emotional and psychological support, they provide a potential pool of employees. Seventeen (65.4 per cent) of the 26 self-employed immigrants in the study recruited staff mainly from their own ethnic group (including family members), while a further five recruited staff from both their own ethnic group and the general population. Local immigrant/ethnic communities also provided certain niche marketing opportunities, though it was necessary for most of the participants to look to the needs of the wider population. For only six of the participants their own immigrant/ethnic community was predominantly or exclusively their business market. Nineteen (73 per cent) reported that they had encouraged or assisted other immigrants (mainly from their own country of origin) to start up their own businesses. Fifteen (57.7 per cent) indicated that they were mentoring other immigrants who were running their own businesses or who were considering self-employment as an option.

It was apparent from the interviews that there could be negative as well as positive aspects to involvement with local immigrant/ethnic communities. Some references were made to strong market competition from other immigrants or co-ethnics, while rivalries and personality clashes could lead to lack of support from some community members. Some of the participants were of the view that their own community group could be more helpful in a number of respects. This was found especially among immigrants from South Africa who felt that the benefits of experience were not being passed on. In all, nine of the 26 participants (34.6 per cent) felt that immigrant/ethnic communities could be much more active in supporting immigrant businesses with their custom, and in providing advice and other assistance.

As far as the role played by immigrants in the country's development was concerned, the participants emphasized the importance of the contribution of immigrant entrepreneurs socially and culturally as well as economically. They considered that the introduction of overseas products and services added colour and choice to the domestic market and generally enriched social life. They also saw the potential of combining the traditional knowledge of their country of origin with local expertise to produce and market improved products to world markets. A number had received awards for such improvements or innovations: three had received awards that recognized technological innovations; one had received two New Zealand awards, 'Best New Business' and 'Best Innovative Business'; and one had received a technical award for the product produced and a patent from a trade fair in the People's Republic of China.

Implications

This chapter has examined views and experiences of immigrant involvement in New Zealand business activity and the use of immigrants' cultural capital resources. Data have been drawn in the main from three studies conducted as part of Massey University's New Settlers Programme. The three studies have provided different perspectives on immigrant cultural capital: general perceptions of immigrant cultural influences; use of immigrant cultural resources in companies involved in international business, trade and tourism; and use of immigrant cultural capital in self-employment.

The first two studies provided data that suggest that the cultural assets that immigrants bring to the country are inadequately recognized or appreciated. It seems clear that New Zealand has not as yet capitalized fully on the increased diversity in its population that is the result of a more open, liberal immigration policy. In this regard one can compare the New Zealand experience with that of its near neighbour, Australia. In Australia, a productive diversity strategy has been developed to identify immigrant cultural capital potential and to use this resource effectively (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1998, 1999). As part of this strategy the business community is encouraged to draw on the diverse language skills, cultural insights and perspectives of their employees. By doing so, the country gains a 'diversity dividend' (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997: 170). There is obviously scope for more determined efforts in New Zealand to develop a co-ordinated strategy of this kind.

The productive use of immigrant cultural capital was more apparent in the third study that investigated the views and experiences of self-employed immigrants. It was clear that some of the business disadvantages suffered by people who are new to the country could be mitigated by their ability to call on their cultural reserves. Their links with those with whom they had cultural affinity in their countries of origin and in New Zealand were valuable business resources, as were the ideas, insights and experiences that they brought with them. These attributes helped them to be innovative and to seize new market opportunities when they arose. Their enterprise brought choice and variety to the marketplace, added colour and vitality to New Zealand life and helped the country to be better equipped for the challenges of a more global world. In general, the results of this study bear out the view of Cameron and Massey (1999) that immigrants who are successfully running their own enterprises not only contribute to the economic well-being of the country but also enrich New Zealand socially and culturally by introducing new ideas, insights and experiences.

It follows that such enterprise deserves support from the New Zealand community as a whole. Such support demands the attention of different organizations and groups at different levels. At the national level there is a need for immigration policies that regulate entry into the country, to be complemented by well planned and co-ordinated settlement policies that provide assistance for immigrants when they arrive in the country. Such assistance should include more help for people wishing to set up in business in terms of provision of information and advice. In addition, as Trlin (1993) pointed out, an integrated institutional structure of immigration also requires a comprehensive ethnic relations policy deigned to promote understanding of cultural diversity and celebrate its advantages. Immigrant businesses are more likely to flourish in an environment where newcomers feel welcome and accepted and their contribution is valued. The business sector also has a role in supporting immigrant/ethnic enterprises, as it is to the advantage of New Zealand business in general to have in its midst people with contacts with the outside world and who bring in new ideas and experiences. Similarly, local authorities have a role to play in helping immigrants to make contacts with people who could offer them assistance in finding employment or setting up businesses. Finally, the immigrants themselves must share responsibility for forging links with co-ethnics as well as engaging with the wider community. It is in their interests to help New Zealand society become more aware of the unique cultural resources that they possess and to demonstrate how these can contribute to the enrichment of life in the host country.

Conclusion

While self-employed immigrants demonstrate the business potential of the cultural capital that they possess by drawing on this resource in developing their own businesses domestically and/or internationally, mainstream New Zealand companies appear to have been slow to recognize and utilize the cultural backgrounds of immigrant employees. In many respects immigrant cultural resources still remain a hidden asset. Even in the case of self-employed immigrants, the potential can be hampered by the lack of acknowledgment of the value of immigrant cultural capital that is pervasive in New Zealand society. As long as this attitude persists, New Zealand will continue to miss out on reaping the full economic benefits that should accrue from its targeted immigration programme.

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